

Participant information sheet

Is inflexibility in thinking a determinant for adhering to mental health therapies?

Hello, my name is Shaunak Deshpande. I am a trainee clinical psychologist. As part of my doctoral training in clinical psychology at Hertfordshire University, I invite you to participate in my research exploring how flexibility in thinking can influence well-being and adherence to therapies.

It is essential for you to have the necessary information about this research before deciding whether or not to participate. Please read through this information, and if you have any questions, feel free to contact us (contact details are provided below).

What is the purpose of this study?

There is little research that explores this topic despite those receiving mental health therapies often face difficulties during treatment and poor treatment outcomes. This research aims to understand how flexibility in thinking influences participation in mental health treatments and its effects on well-being. We will ask you to complete some questions exploring personality traits, well-being, and treatment adherence, as well as a puzzle measuring flexibility in thinking.

Do I have to take part?

As a participant in this research, we ask that you answer these questions as truthfully as possible by giving the most relevant rating of your situation. Participation is voluntary, so you are not required to complete the survey. *You can withdraw anytime without a reason*; you only need to close the internet browser.

Are there any age or other restrictions that may prevent me from participating?

You can take part in this research if you are aged 18 or above and have received some form of mental health treatment in the last 12 months. This includes receiving some form of talking therapy or psychiatric medication.

You also should have been diagnosed by a mental health professional with one or more of the following mental health disorders: obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) or a related disorder such as body dysmorphic disorder, olfactory reference disorder, hypochondriasis (health anxiety), hoarding disorder, hair-pulling disorder, skin-picking disorder, or an eating disorder such as anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, binge eating disorder, and avoidant restrictive food intake disorder.

You will also need to have access to some form of digital device, such as a computer, laptop or smartphone.

How long will my part in the study take?

The survey can be completed via smartphones, tablets, and personal computers/laptops. The survey will usually take around 30 minutes to complete.

What will happen to me if I take part?

Should you choose to participate, we recommend you find a quiet room where you will not be disturbed for the duration of the study (about 30 minutes). You will be asked questions about your personal circumstances and mental health. You then will be asked to complete **some questionnaires measuring psychological well-being, personality traits, adherence to mental health treatments, and a puzzle measuring flexibility in thinking** .

What are the possible disadvantages, risks or side effects of taking part?

We do not expect the survey to be distressing; you may withdraw from the survey at any point by simply closing the internet browser. In doing so, no information you have disclosed up to that point will be recorded.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Your contribution to this research will help us to raise our understanding of how flexibility in thinking influences well-being and adherence to treatments, with potential for guiding development of more effective approaches for treating these disorders. In case you are struggling with your mental wellbeing you will also receive access to an information leaflet that will direct you to various self-help resources that could support you with your mental wellbeing. The information provided in this document is provided by the World Health Organisation (WHO), Centre For Disease (CDC) and NHS .

How will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

All information that you provide will be anonymised. This means the responses to the questions asked to you cannot be traced back to you. All data from the study will be securely stored on the Hertfordshire University server. Your data and those of others who have participated could be presented in combined form in a thesis, research meetings, and peer-review journals. Steps will also be taken to maintain confidentiality in line with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) when handling data, and data will be stored for five years and then deleted. If you wish to view the research findings, you can view them in Hertfordshire University's research archive in the final quarter of 2025 by searching my name.

Should I expect to receive any feedback on my results?

We cannot give personalised feedback on your performance, and results cannot be used to make a clinical diagnosis or for any other purpose.

Who has reviewed this study?

This project has been approved by the University of Hertfordshire Health, Science, Engineering and Technology Ethics Committee with Delegated Authority (ECDA) (UH protocol number: 05541).

Who can I contact if I have any questions?

If there is anything unclear or you wish to discuss about this project, please do not hesitate to contact us using the details below.

Your support is very much appreciated.

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Thank you very much for reading this information and considering taking part in this study.

If you are happy to participate, please continue to the consent form on the following page.

